Uncover How Mast Cells Affect Your Hormone And Overall Wellness Transcript

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Introduction to Mast Cells and the Summit

Hi, ladies. Welcome back to Mastering The Meno(Pause) Transition Summit 3.0. I am still your host Dr. Sharon Stills, and I am still excited to be here with you all, bringing you new information that is important to you at this time of your life.

And so today we have a very special conversation. We're going to be talking about Mast Cells, and we actually have not talked about mast cells and mast cell activation syndrome on the Summit yet in the past two years.

So I'm super, super excited because this is a really important topic. And I found the expert to bring to you to have this conversation. So many of you may know Dr. Kelly McCann, she hosts her own summits on mast cells and histamine, and she has an extensive amount of knowledge.

We were just talking that she did her fellowship at the integrative, Dr. Wilds program in Tucson and used to be in Scottsdale. So we've kind of crisscrossed where we live and where we are.

And so I'm really excited to talk with her today and have her share all her knowledge with you. So welcome. Welcome to the Summit. Thank you so much, Dr. Stills.

It's great to have you here. So I'm just gonna I'm just gonna jump in and I guess the first thing before we really get stuck into the meat and potatoes is just.

How do you have a personal story, like how how did this becomes an area of expertise for you? yes. I do have a, personal story. I was most exposed a number of times.

Had always been an allergic kid. You know, allergies, growing up, and then had multiple, multiple exposures over the years, and my sensitivities got worse and worse.

So I developed, non severe gluten sensitivity and then allergies and sensitivities to almonds, peas, rice, oranges, apples, strawberries all these things, neurological symptoms of fatigue.

fortunately for me, my hormones didn't go that crazy. but figured out that it was mast cell activation syndrome triggered by mold. And and I was already seeing mold patients.

Patients with Lyme disease and other chronic infections, environmental toxic patients, you know, people who had been, exposed to pesticides and EMFs and they were getting more and more and more and more sensitive.

and so I realized I needed to figure out what was going on with them.

Dr. McCannu2019s Personal Mast Cell Story

I learned from Dr. Lawrence Afrin and then decided I really needed to help get this word out to more people, because mast cell activation syndrome affects 17% of the population pre-COVID.

And I think with Covid, it's probably blossomed, you know, maybe 20 plus percent of the population. So that's 1 in 5 people. And it does tend to have a predominance, impact on women.

And so women are much more likely to have mast cell than men. We don't know exactly why that is. except to say that there are lots of mast cells in the, genital urinary tract of females.

So it's not surprising that women are more affected by mast cell activation syndrome. so how does someone

listening? Because I'm sure a lot of women listening, I'm like, ooh, check.

I have that, I have that, I have that. And so you're saying definitely Covid and vaccines, they've kind of changed the whole I know for me in my practice it's changed the whole field.

doing an intake of doing a differential diagnosis of making a plan for a patient. It's this whole new realm. And you talked about mold. Are there any other, predisposing factors that you see that the ladies should be looking out for?

I think if you tend to be sensitive, if you tend to have food sensitivities, if you tend to like, avoid the detergent aisle in the grocery store, if you get a headache when you go to bed Bath and Beyond, or you can't go to Yankee Candle anymore, like, those are big red flags that your mast cells are not happy with you.

certainly if people have, developed more food sensitivities over time. and then I didn't check on, I didn't mention really, but hormone dysregulation.

So if you're perimenopausal and, you know, having dysfunctional uterine bleeding or having, dyspareunia or, you know, pain with intercourse, there are some, there's some medical literature that suggests that it could be muscle related.

so super important to understand that this is a possibility. so, so how what is the interplay or the intersection or the dance between mast cells and hormones?

And what do you see? Menopausal, post-menopausal? A it does the incidence go, You know, those are good questions. Let me back up a little bit and tell people more about mast cells, because they're a fairly old player in our in our physiology AG.

They've been around for 5 million years. So many other species of mammals have mast cell and they are they are like the guardians at the gate. Right. They are the the barrier protectors for, for us, between ourselves and the outside world.

So they line our respiratory tract, they line our GI tract, they line, you know, the lower respiratory tract. They're on our skin. They're in the mucous membranes.

so they're going to be in the bladder. They, love the vascular, system because they're hanging out around the blood vessels to see if there's any foreign invaders that are coming through the blood vessels into the tissues.

Mast Cells, Hormones, and Menopause

they line the brain. Excuse me. And they're also in the endometrial. they're in the ovaries. They're they're kind of everywhere. And their job is to fight foreign invaders.

So they are surveilling the the area for danger. And when they perceive a danger, they are going to release their chemical messengers that we call mediators.

And they can release all sorts of inflammatory mediators, things like, histamine and prostate glands, leukotrienes. we now know the term cytokines and chemokines from Covid thanks to Covid.

We know all these fancy terms. and muscles have receptors for all different sorts of hormones, for corticosteroids, for cortical releasing, hormone for substance P, melatonin, estradiol and LH, FSH, as well as, you know, epinephrine and acetylcholine, calcitonin and mast cells can also, synthesize and release a variety of these two, particularly when we're talking about stress hormones.

it can also release, as I mentioned, mellitus in substance P, which has to do with pain. And so these muscles are widely distributed and they're especially in the reproductive tract and even in the placental tissue when women are going through pregnancy.

And they're super important for all of our, for much of our physiology. So we need them. It just so happens in about, you know, 17 to 20% of the population, they decide to go rogue.

They've decided to, become hypersensitive. Now they've been triggered, into reacting to things that aren't necessarily bad things. And so that's really where the problem comes when they're activated and they're hypersensitive and they're secreting these inflammatory meteors when they're not supposed to.

And that's where the problems happen. Awesome. Thank you. Yes. That's good. That way we understand who the critters are. We're talking about. So. So so hormones menopause mast cells estrogen histamine.

And what's the story there. In this story is that it's really complicated and everyone has a unique presentation. So what can happen is if there are if you're exposed to different kinds of environmental triggers.

Right. And the truth is we're bathing in a sea of toxic chemicals. Many homes have mold. we're all under a great deal of stress. There is EMF exposures everywhere.

it's very, very difficult to get away from EMF. So depending upon the person, they might have a predisposition to have, sensitivity to any number of these things or have accumulated more environmental chemicals or what have you.

And those things are triggering the mast cell, and the mast cell can then be acted upon by hormones. We also know that many of the environmental chemicals and even some of the mycotoxins have estrogen mimicking effects.

Right? So there is, you know, estrogens, whether that's the phthalates or the bis phenols, from drinking plastic water bottles or eating all of our food wrapped in plastic, those things can cause, aggravation of your muscles, which then can lead to, histamine release and additional symptoms.

you know, it's very rare these days to have a woman who just sails through menopause and has no problems. Right? Many women struggle a great deal with all sorts of symptoms.

They stop sleeping. And it's not just the loss of hormones. It could be that, you know, their muscles are getting triggered, dumping all these mediators and they're inflamed.

So for women listening, how do you work up a patient? Are there like a list of tests that you use? How do you know if your mast cells are activated. What can they ask their doctors for?

You know, I think it's really important to understand the the clinical picture, because there's no one test that's going to say you have mast cell activation.

although there are a handful of tests that people can run. So for example, if you want to do a test, you can check things like histamine levels, you can check trip test levels, you can check Cro-Magnon A levels through LabCorp quest.

But more of them are important mediators. They're difficult to get. The the samples have to be handled in a exquisite manner. so that they don't get, damaged at all.

So it's kind of difficult to get a laboratory to handle everything properly to make that diagnosis. there are ways to do testing through biopsies. So say, for example, you got a colonoscopy and they did biopsies.

Well, there are special stains that can be done to look at the mass or the numbers of mast cells in a stain. The scene is called a CD 117 stain.

How Mast Cell Activation Is Diagnosed

And usually the biopsy specimens are kept, for, you know, 3 to 5 years after a colonoscopy. So you can often go back to your physician and, and request that they run CD 117 stains on any biopsies that you did for an endoscopy or a cystoscopy or colonoscopy.

and that's one possible supportive marker. but it's really about the clinical presentation. And the way that I would think about it is muscle activation is going to be an allergic, inflammatory or even overgrowth situation in multiple systems of the body.

So if you have, you know, if you're ticking off multiple symptoms when you do your your review of systems in the body, like you have headaches and you have, brain fog and you have anxiety and palpitations and you have, Gerd and you have interstitial cystitis and maybe some, endometriosis and, joint pain.

You you may be dealing with muscle activation, because there's multiple systems of inflammatory in nature or oftentimes people will have hives or rashes or, you know, food restrictions because they have sensitivities or they'll have gastrointestinal symptoms.

so if somebody has one thing, if you just have one thing, chances are you don't have it. But if you have ten systems that are dysfunctional, that's likely, suspect.

And I would want to be I would want to be evaluating that person. Yes. and that's such a good way of explaining it. Right. If you are like, you know, you're just going down the body and there's like something going wrong in every section, then that's a good sign because it is so systemic.

It's not, you know, so where do you begin with treatment and is your treatment different? If this is a post Covid or a post vaccine injury, as opposed to this was going on before Covid?

the treatments can be very similar. It really depends on the person and what they're open to. But oftentimes we can get a lot of mileage from antihistamines.

you know, sometimes another clue is that people come in, come in on antihistamine means they already take them because they feel better on them. and they're blocking histamine action.

And so we know that there's some inflammatory histamine issues. So I'll often start with H1 blockers H2 blockers. if they're open to that. Sometimes we have to compound them because they're sensitive even to the inactive ingredients in those pharmaceuticals.

there's a a prescription medicine called Crumlin that I love. Crumlin is, it's not really absorbed. So it can be taken orally to help with gastrointestinal symptoms.

and it can have wide ranging, other systemic effects too, even though it's not absorbed because it's calming down those mast cells which then translate elsewhere in the body.

so I've had patients who take bromelain and it makes their itching better or it makes their, menstrual bleeding better. It's really kind of amazing how Crumlin can work like that.

another one of my favorite, prescriptions is a compounded medication called ketoprofen. ketone. Often is thought to be a antihistamine, but more so a muscle stabilizer.

And it's only available compounded, the commercially available product is an Eyedrop. So if people have specific eye marcel symptoms, then, then I'll use that.

And then there are I mean, there are other medications on top of that that we can go into like Luca train inhibitors. Some people will use Solaire, which can be really effective.

There are tyrosine kinase inhibitors. But I don't find that I need to use those. and then there's a ton of supplements,

so many different supplements, quercetin luteal and perilla seed pick at all, PTA or pomodoro and espanola.

I mean, CBD can be helpful in some patients. low histamine, probiotics, Dao enzymes, curcumin, resveratrol. Berber. I'm sorry. let's see, butterbeer, I the the list goes on and on and on.

Treatment Approaches and Post-COVID Support

and so with patients who have menopausal issues and they have all the symptoms of Marcel, we start to treat them, Marcel, and then see how much benefit we get in terms of the hormones, and their menopausal symptoms, because oftentimes quieting the muscles will quiet down the inflammation that could be driving some of those hot flashes and night sweats and insomnia symptoms that some women get, for example, in terms of post-Covid, I do use ivermectin.

I found that to be incredibly helpful with patients at quieting, the, the post-Covid I'll use natto kinase, with some effect. I've been looking a lot at the Hippocrates gullibility piece, which I'm finding is incredibly common in my patient population.

and so using things like bulwark or lumbar kinase to help with, the clotting issues, massage activation has been traditionally thought to be more associated with bleeding disorders because muscles do make and secrete heparin, which causes, bleeding.

And as I mentioned earlier, that dysfunctional uterine bleeding, is has been associated with mass inactivation in some patients. and fascinatingly enough, if, you know, treating with hormones doesn't seem to work, there are a couple of case series where they treated with Crumlin vaginally or or Benadryl vaginally, and that helps some of the dysfunctional uterine bleeding, which is truly amazing.

yeah. I have one young woman, she's in her 30s and doing, doing, a Zyrtec inserted, one of the dissolvable ones, like, changed her, her vaginal pain with intercourse.

It was really pretty impressive. Wow. That's super cool. I just want to circle back. There's a few things you said that I'm sure triggered some questions in the audience.

So you said low histamine probiotics. And I'm sure that made a lot of women going, wait. my problem. Like, so can you just dive into that a little deeper?

Sir, I have to admit, I haven't, memorized all the the low estimated probiotics, but typically the bifidobacteria species are much more inclined to be low histamine.

there's a product that I like out there called, true bisto by Master supplements that many of my sensitive Marcelle patients tolerate very well. I know, seeking health also has a low probiotic, a low histamine probiotic.

and not everybody needs a low histamine probiotic. It's really it's very variable oil. not everybody has histamine intolerance. not everybody has problems with Dao just because they have mast cell.

so for example, I don't have histamine intolerance as part of my, my issues, I can eat, three day old food. And that's a reaction. To the leftovers. I can eat the leftovers.

but for many people, they can't. It's a huge issue. And that's a symptom of histamine intolerance. and can you talk about. I think another big concern is bone health and osteopenia.

Osteoporosis. in this, you know, age range where we're going through the hormonal changes. So what what's the connection with mast cells? Is there connection.

That there is a connection? again, because mast cells have so many different receptors, it can absolutely play a role, of up regulating bone turnover or interfering with bone, being laid down, I think it's generally more of the

upregulation that's happening.

So we're turning over more bones. we also tend to do that when we're inflamed. And then on top of that, now we don't have the hormones to help us. And if you know patients with mass I tend to not feel very well.

They tend to not be able to be very active. Those things can, you know, trigger muscle activation. And so now you've got, sedentary lifestyle that's going to contribute to it too, which is a huge problem.

So identifying that somebody has mass activation is so critically important for all aspects of health. because once we're able to dial down those muscles and recover the nervous system, then people can go on and live their healthy lives.

Right? And is it something you find needs to be toned down and paid attention to forever? there are ebbs and flows of it. And the really the goal is to calm down.

Environmental Triggers and Toxic Exposures

Usually they're coming in because they've recently gotten a flare, right? They got Covid, they moved into, newly renovated house, and they themselves, with all of the environmental chemicals that are in building materials and they're sick.

And so we have to work to dial everything down. and there is a variety of different ways that we use on top of just supplements and medications. Right? We're trying to quiet the nervous system.

Do vagus nervous nervous system work. do limbic system route work, all of the things. and as we come those things down, people get better. And I think I forgot what the question is.

I've already moved on to my next question. Okay. All right. Good. what's your favorite thing to do for vagus? Nervous. my new favorite thing, actually, is the, the Apollo neuro.

Have you. Are you familiar with the Apollo Neuro? Yeah. yeah. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about it. So, it's, it's a vibration device, and it delivers, gentle vibrations that are supposed to stimulate the vagus nerve.

Either to be able to focus or to calm the vagus nerve down. So getting people out of fight, flight or freeze, and it has several different programs that people can use.

I had a woman with mast cell activation who's been on Ambien for 20, 30 years. She's in her 70s, so she's clearly post-menopausal. but she got off Ambien using only the Apollo Neuro, and she uses it all night to sleep.

I love that, yeah. Amazing is that. I'm always like, hashtag. Not all medicine comes in a pill bottle. You know, even the vitamin bottles that I have all over.

But it's like, you know, there's so many things we have to do externally. Could you just speak a little because you mentioned we chuckle, but it's really like, what do you want the listeners to be thinking about?

Because the toxic home, the toxic new car, are there some things they should be looking for, things they can be doing to mitigate what they're being exposed to?

Emfs big thing? Yeah, I think I think you have to recognize that it's and it's an overwhelming and daunting, experience to realize that what is invisible is, is potentially harming you just because you can't see it in your water, just because you can't see it in your air, doesn't mean it's not poisoning you.

and then, you know, most people by this time know we need to eat organic, right? So that message has gotten out there to the world. That organic is important.

and, you know, many of our colleagues will say clean air, clean water, clean food, and that sounds great. But what does that mean? You know, okay, I put an I put an air filter in my room.

but if I'm not paying attention to taking my shoes off when I get home, and I'm walking all over the grass and all over the pesticides and God knows what else is out there.

And then I walk into my home and I'm not taking my shoes off. And I'm not vacuuming regularly. That poor air filter is not not going to be sufficient to clean the air.

I'm when we, when we do renovations, when patients come in and like, oh, I'm so excited. I just renovated my home. I think, oh, God. Right. Oh, no. You still have to talk to me first, right?

because so many of the environmental chemicals were exposed to our in our homes. They're in the glues. They're in the vinyl flooring. That is super, super toxic.

they're in the, the particle board in the from form of formaldehyde. So there are plastics and VOCs and things. So that's the overwhelmed piece. what I want to suggest is let's start with simple things.

after you've cleaned up your diet, if you're not organic yet, let's make yourself organic as much as possible. Pay attention to what you're cooking your food, and pay attention to the packaging that your food comes in.

Most foods now are wrapped in plastic that is not good for us. Go to the farmer's markets. Use, you know, use non plastic wrappers. you can wrap things in paper.

don't drink out of plastic water bottles. Don't drink out of plastic water bottles. Not only are there, phthalates and bisphenol S in them, but they're microplastics.

And microplastics are in every organ in the body. And it's really, really, tragic. and it's going to be the downfall of the human race, I think. so no more plastic look at your, cooking wear and then clean up your personal care products.

There are great apps out there. I love the app Yucca, for identifying, healthy personal care products. It grades the. It has a scanner. So you can take it right into the, Whole Foods or wherever you're going to look for your stuff.

and you can scan the products right there in the store and figure out what are the least toxic, healthiest products for you in terms of your personal care products, your hair care products, your, makeup, etc.?

Yeah, it's a great app. I've even because I've been doing this for, you know, 30 years, but I've even learned. So I'm like, what, on the Yucca app? You know, it's like, oh no.

And it's so easy to be misled. You go in and it says like not tested on animals and vegan and natural and, but, you know, the marketing is so deceitful.

So it, it set up. It's really important to have a tool like that because, you know, it's hard to know sometimes especially like if you don't spend all your time studying it.

And so you could think something is natural and it actually can be harmful. So I love the new apps. And yeah, I, I've had a shoeless house for, gosh for over 30 years.

And it's just it's just such an easy thing you can do, you know. And then you take that out to like don't use chemicals on your yard and then and then once you do that, then like, you know, start to talk to your neighbors so they're there chemicals aren't coming on to your non-chemical yard.

And like so it is daunting. But there are things that we have, especially within our own homes, that we can start to really make a difference. And it it's just the reality of the world we live in.

And I don't think it's I wish we could sit here and go, it's getting less toxic. So don't worry. But it's you know, it's actually getting more toxic. And I love what you said because I say that all the time.

It's like the invisible stuff, like the wife I like. I'm having a whole new realm of, like, you know, my phone because it I realize how much I'm on it.

And like, this is the finger I scroll with. And I kind of hold the phone and all of a sudden I started getting like this deep aching in my. Oh my goodness, yes.

Oh my God, my fingers now getting Wi-Fi. Now I'm like afraid to even touch my phone. But we don't think about these things and we are so inundated.

Vagus Nerve, Limbic System, and Healing

I'm not saying to like, totally divorce your phone because you know, we're dependent upon them now, but, you know, maybe a little like separation, a little time where you, you know, now I'm like, I'm not.

I'm going out and I'm not bringing my phone with me. So we just have to be we just have to be on top of these things. Right? Exactly. Like, for example, at night, put your phone in airplane mode or put your phone in the other room in airplane mode.

No, I rolled right, right. Turn off your Wi-Fi at night. That's it. That's a huge one. I mean, there are ways to educate yourself. There are mirrors that you can get if you're really concerned about Wi-Fi and, EMF in particular.

and there are different ways to teach yourself. You can have, building biologists come out to your house who can check for mold. many of them can check your water, your, your air.

they can look for things like VOCs and formaldehyde and give you an idea of of what the health of the air is in your home. Yeah. It's so, so important.

I just want to echo that because often we're just so trained like, you know, I'm sure people come to you, doctor McCann. They come to me, doctor, you know, what can I take to feel better?

And often it's not what you need to take. It's what you need to really use or let go of or avoid. And I just had a patient who was living in black mold and went from fully functioning to couldn't even, like, tie her shoes.

It was so and I was like, what is going on? And then I figured I was like, you got to get out of that house. Like yesterday. Rent got herself moved out and it was like a brand new house.

And, you know, these are not easy things to to do. It's kind of like when I send patients to the biological dentists, it's like, I understand, but but they have such a big impact.

I just she's on my mind cause I just saw her yesterday and she's been out of the house now for probably about two months. And I'm like, you're back. And all she did was just remove herself.

She moved into her guest house. Luckily she had a guest house that she could move into. Sometimes we've got to move to a family member and, yeah, motel, whatever it is.

And then we still got to be checking to make sure those are clean places, but it's just, I hope you take from what Dr. McCann is saying that, you know, looking at your environment is so super, super important.

So as we wind up, is there anything about mast cells that you wanted to share that we didn't get to talk about, that you want to add in. A couple things?

Vagus nerve, Mast cell, Limbic system. You know, that's the three legged stool for really helping people get better.

and I think the important thing is, in terms of limbic system, that's the, you know, ancient part of the brain that takes our, experiences and our emotions and turns them into memory, and it can get fired up and stuck in what we call limbic system activation.

And each person who ends up with mass activation. In. Their their experience is going to be different. Their journey back to health is going to be different.

and actually, I don't even like the term back to health because I think what happens is people have the opportunity to really heal, not just their physiology, not just their physical bodies, but they have the opportunity to heal the underlying emotional, mental, psychological underpinnings, the traumas, the mis beliefs and mis identifications that they have about themselves that set them up to get there in the first place.

And now, if they're willing to take on the possibility that they can truly heal and not only heal, but improve upon who they are, fully express their entire being, it's a gift.

It's a gift. Yes, exactly. And I, I love when patients come to that realization like, it sounds weird, but, you know, I'm so glad I got cancer or had a chronic illness or Lyme or whatever because it really gave me a gift.

And and that is the that is the work I believe we're here to do, to really work on our emotions and our regulation and our traumas and things. It's part of the human gig.

So I love that you kind of tied it in a bow with that. Perfect. And so where can the listeners find out more about you?

Where to Learn More and Closing Remarks

how to how do they learn more? I have a brick and mortar practice in Southern California. my clinic is called The Spring Center. You have to put the somebody else had Spring Center, so it's thespringcenter.com.

I do see patients from all over the country. they have to come to California to establish care. And then I probably have, 11 or 12, medical licenses in other states which enable me to see you and follow up.

for those of you who where I don't have licenses, to practice medicine, I do have an online webinar series. and I do have, Mast Cell Masterclass that you can check out at drkellymccann.com And just spell your name.

So Kelly McCann. Perfect. Awesome. Well thank you. And I'm happy because we've got a big brick and mortar clinic going up. And I feel like so many people are going out of Brick-and-Mortar and online.

And I had a Brick-and-Mortar, and I went and did telemedicine for 12 years. And now I'm back in the Brick-and-Mortar. And part of it is because of the increase post-Covid, very, very sick people who need health bad.

I feel like you just you can't do everything online. You need to have a place to go and to heal. So I love that you have a place for people to come and heal as well.

So thank you. Good luck with their clinic. That's exciting. Thank you for being here. Thank you for all that you do. And go check her out. That was drkellymccann.com.

Yeah. So go check her out and learn more. Especially if you feel like oh my god she was speaking to me. If you could really relate. And so we'll be back with another talk.

So thank you for being here. And stay tuned. Bye everyone.